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WSAG

22 APR 75

(Del's copy)

22 April 1975

DCI BRIEFING FOR
22 APRIL WSAG MEETING

VIETNAM

- I. There has been a lull in the ground fighting in the past 24 hours, but we have no information connecting this with political considerations. Attacks by fire are continuing. At this point the Communists' public response to President Thieu's resignation gives no encouragement to the prospects for ~~meaningful~~ negotiations.
 - A. Both PRG and North Vietnamese statements have declared that Thieu's resignation by itself means nothing and have demanded that the entire government be replaced.
 1. The PRG has dismissed Thieu's departure as a "clumsy and deceptive trick."
 2. The Communists now appear to be focusing their demands on a total withdrawal of the US presence in South Vietnam and support for Saigon.
 - a. The PRG spokesman in Saigon stated today that "the situation cannot change"

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SECRET

25X1

if the US continues its "intervention in South Vietnamese affairs."

- b. A North Vietnamese press commentary today pointed out that all Americans could be evacuated "in a very short time, even in one day, without any difficulty or obstacle."
 - c. The commentary went on to strongly condemn US expressions of concern about Communist reprisals in the South and appeared to warn against any US effort to evacuate large numbers of South Vietnamese. The commentary pointed out that the US naval task force moving toward South Vietnamese waters was far more than would be required to evacuate Americans.
- B. In short, the Communists appear to be telling us that a totally new South Vietnamese government and a quick and total US withdrawal will be the price for ~~a negotiated~~ surrender. At least in this public stance, there is no hint of give in their position.

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

- II. While nearly all South Vietnamese recognize the need to create a new government, they lack a clearcut scenario. There simply may not be enough time left for the round of political maneuvering that is already underway.
- A. General "Big Minh," probably the leading candidate to head a new cabinet, is calling for a new government including staunchly anti-Thieu figures such as the militant Catholic opposition leader Father Thanh and elements of the An Quang Buddhists.
- B. Former Vice-President Ky appears to be trying to insinuate himself into the picture and is promoting a new government based around himself, General Vien, the chief of the JGS, and former Prime Minister Khiem, with "Big Minh" in a ceremonial role.
- C. There is also maneuvering in the Senate to replace Tran Van Lam with ^{Vu}~~Tran~~ Van Mau, a Buddhist, so that he could become Chief of State when Huong resigns.
- III. In the aftermath of Thieu's resignation, Saigon was quiet during the day today. No breakdown of

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25X1

law and order or upsurge in the steady growth of anti-Americanism was evident.

A. Senior GVN officials are not leaving their posts, although a number of them are taking action to move their families out of the country.

IV. The specifics in the military situation are as follows.

A. a Communist force comprised of artillery, armor, sappers, and infantry is planning to conduct a coordinated attack on Tan Son Nhut airbase northwest of the capital.

25X1

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

4. The Communists may now have antiaircraft guns within eight miles of the airbase.
5. These North Vietnamese plans to attack Tan Son Nhut may reflect more a desire to humiliate the US than a military judgment that such an action is necessary for the defeat of South Vietnam.
- B. To the east of the capital, the South Vietnamese have transferred one of the two Marine brigades in defensive positions near Bien Hoa back to Vung Tau to bolster defenses in that area.
1. Remnants of the 18th Division and some Airborne and armor units extracted from Xuan Loc have moved to positions near the Bien Hoa - Long Binh complex.
- C. The Communists are shelling the Bien Hoa airbase daily, and [REDACTED] they are targeting specific sectors of the base, including the helicopter landing pad, the military vehicle parking area, and the commanding general and officers' housing area.

25X1

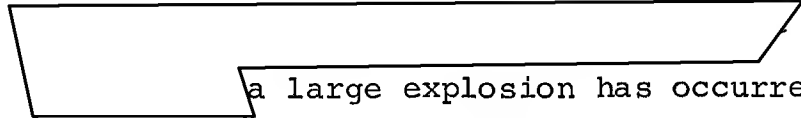
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a large explosion has occurred
in Bien Hoa  probably at an ammunition depot, but we have no details yet.

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D. The government airstrike on 16 April against a Communist convoy carrying SA-2 missiles south through Phuoc Long Province toward Saigon reportedly resulted in heavy damage and forced the convoy to return to Quang Duc Province.

V. The Communists appear to be on the verge of re-opening additional airfields in the central part of South Vietnam.

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VI. Information is sketchy as to how the Communists are administering the areas of South Vietnam now under their control but it is clear that they are wasting little time in consolidating their control.

A. The Communists are making an obvious effort to calm popular fears and prevent massive numbers of refugees from moving south. To this end, they are attempting to create the appearance of some non-Communist participation in their new administrations.

B. At the same time, however, they are dealing firmly with any potential sources of local resistance.

1. It is impossible to estimate the scope and magnitude of the process of purge and reprisal now underway but eyewitness accounts in some areas bear out a pattern of summary execution by Viet Cong units immediately after the takeover. Police appear to be particularly vulnerable.

2. [REDACTED] Hanoi's forces are now attempting to take firmer control of the reprisal process.

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